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Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 H-02 SSM-05

SSO-00 SS-15 PM-04 NSCE-00 NSC-05 INRE-00 /102 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:EOJONES
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
S/PRS - MR. FUNSETH (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
EUR/P - MR. JERABEK
IO/P - MR. BLACHLY
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/ARP - MR. DICKMAN
AF/P - MR. POPE S/S-O:MMCFARLANE
NEA - MS. GRIFFIN
---------- 046173
O 170247Z JUL 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY SANA

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AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
USMISSION SINAI
CINCEUR

UNCLAS STATE 177554

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - JULY 16

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE, FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR JULY 16, 1976:

QUOTE: MR. FUNSETH: GOOD AFTERNOON. WHY DON'T I BEGIN THE BRIEFING BY READING THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WAS MADE IN BEIRUT AT ABOUT 1:00 O'CLOCK OUR TIME THIS MORNING, TO EXPLAIN WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED THERE. WE HAVE COPIES OF THIS WHICH ARE BEING PASSED OUT, SO I WILL JUST READ IT QUICKLY; THIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS ALSO BROADCAST BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA, AND WAS ISSUED IN BEIRUT:

'THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IN BEIRUT WISHES TO INFORM ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS STILL IN LEBANON THAT IT WILL BE ELIMINATING THE MAJORITY OF ITS FUNCTIONS, INCLUDING CONSULAR SERVICES, AS OF MONDAY, JULY 19. IT IS FORCED TO TAKE THIS STEP BY THE INCREASING DIFFICULTIES OF OPER-ATING IN BEIRUT, WHICH REQUIRE THE REDUCTION OF THE EMBASSY
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STAFF TO A BARE MINIMUM. THE EMBASSY WILL NO LONGER HAVE THE CAPABILITY EFFECTIVELY TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AFTER THAT DATE. WE, THEREFORE,

STRONGLY URGE ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY AT THIS TIME.

'THE EMBASSY IS ARRANGING TRANSPORTATION FOR DEPARTURE FROM WEST BEIRUT ON TUESDAY, JULY 20. DETAILS OF ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEPARTURE WILL BE BROADCAST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND AT THAT TIME INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE SE-CURED BY EITHER VISITING OR TELEPHONING THE EMBASSY CON-SULAR SECTION, TELEPHONE 361800 OR 348319. AMERICAN

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CITIZENS ARE URGED MEANWHILE TO INFORM THE EMBASSY BY NOON SUNDAY, JULY 18, IF THEY PLAN TO DEPART ON JULY 20.

'CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS ORGANIZED DEPARTURE SHOULD CONTACT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY CONSULAR SECTION.'

Q. BOB.

A. YES, SIR.

Q. DOES THIS MEAN THAT STATE DEPARTMENT IS VIEWING THE SITUATION IN LEBANON WITH INCREASING SKEPTICISM, DESPAIR, OR WHATEVER? MAYBE NOT DESPAIR, BUT SKEPTICISM. HOPE-LESSNESS?

A. NO. THE REASON WE HAVE MADE THIS DECISION IS SIMPLY THE RESULT OF THE EVOLVING SITUATION.

AS YOU ALL KNOW, LIVING CONDITIONS IN BEIRUT HAVE BEEN STEADILY DETERIORATING OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS. TELEPHONE SERVICE, FUEL, WATER, AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEMS HAVE BROKEN DOWN. AND THE UNCERTAIN SECURITY SITUATION MAKES IT IN-CREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO MOVE AROUND THE CITY.

SOME OFFICIAL AMERICAN PERSONNEL HAVE DEPARTED IN THE WEEKS SINCE THE AMERICAN EVACUATION BY SEA IN JUNE THROUGH AT LEAST TWO INTERNATIONAL ROAD CONVOYS TO DAMASCUS. SO THIS UNCLASSIFIED

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LATEST MOVE SHOULD BE SEEN AS A CONTINUATION OF THAT REDUCTION.

Q. THERE ARE TWO OTHERS, YOU SAY, BOB?

A. YES. NOW--

Q. WAIT A MINUTE, CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC?

A. I DO NOT HAVE THE DATES ON THOSE. THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE JUNE 20TH. THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST TWO.

Q. TWO CONVOYS?
Q. BOB, CAN YOU GIVE US SOME OF THE SORT OF LOGISTICAL DETAILS OF THE EMBASSY? WHAT IS THE STAFF? WHAT WAS THE STAFF ORIGINALLY? WHAT IS IT NOW? AND WHAT WILL IT BE AFTER THIS CUTBACK?

A. RIGHT NOW IT IS ABOUT 36. IN JUNE IT WAS OVER 50. AND AFTER THIS, IT WILL BE 10 TO 15.

I WOULD POINT OUT THAT OTHER EMBASSIES HAVE EITHER LEFT,

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OR HAVE ALREADY REDUCED THEIR PERSONNEL DRASTICALLY AND
NOW WE ARE MOVING TO DO THE SAME.

Q. IS THIS GOING TO BE A ROAD CONVOY, OR ARE THEY GOING
TO HAVE ANOTHER SEA LIFT?

A. WE HAVE NOT DECIDED THAT YET.

Q. BOB , HOW BIG IS THE LEBANESE STAFF AT THE EMBASSY?
YOU MUST HAVE LEBANESE SUPPORTING HELP.

A. I WILL HAVE TO CHECK INTO THAT. I DO NOT HAVE THAT
INFORMATION.

Q. WOULD YOUR 10 TO 15 INCLUDE LEBANESE?

A. I AM JUST TALKING ABOUT AMERICAN STAFF.

Q. AMERICAN STAFF.
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A. AND AS YOU KNOW, THERE HAVE NOT BEEN ANY DEPENDENTS
THERE FOR A LONG TIME.

Q. BOB, ALONG WITH THE TERRIBLE LIVING CONDITIONS IN
BEIRUT AND THE SECURITY PROBLEMS, DOES THIS DECISION
REFLECT ANY JUDGMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT THAT THERE IS LIKELY
TO BE INCREASING FIGHTING IN BEIRUT? SPECIFICALLY, IS
THERE ANY EXPECTATION THAT THE CHRISTIAN FORCES WILL MOVE
INTO THE WESTERN PART OF BEIRUT, IN FORCE, WHERE THE PART
OF THE EMBASSY IS?

A. NO SINGLE DEVELOPMENT HAS PROMPTED OUR DECISION, SCOTT.
IT IS THE STEADILY DETERIORATING CONDITIONS -- LIVING
CONDITIONS -- AND THE UNCERTAIN SECURITY SITUATION WHICH
HAS NOT, AS YOU KNOW, BEEN GETTING ANY BETTER.

Q. BUT DOES THE DEPARTMENT -- I AM JUST PICKING UP THIS
QUESTION -- DOES THE DEPARTMENT EXPECT THE CHRISTIANS
TO MOVE AGAINST THE MOSLEM HELD AREAS OF BEIRUT?

A. I DO NOT HAVE THAT KIND OF INFORMATION, MARVIN.

Q. HOW MANY AMERICANS --

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER AMBASSADOR SEELYE HAS HAD AN
OPPORTUNITY SINCE HIS ARRIVAL, OF TALKING WITH THE
CHRISTIAN LEADERS?

A. HE MAY HAVE MET SOME CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN WEST BEIRUT,
BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY NAMES. BUT AS YOU KNOW, THE PRINCIPAL
CHRISTIAN LEADERS LIVE IN EAST BEIRUT; AND HE HAS NOT BEEN

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ABLE TO GET INTO EAST BEIRUT.

Q. THAT'S WHAT I MEANT. HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE THEN TO SEE SOME OF THEM. -- - --

A. THAT IS CORRECT.

Q. WILL MR. SEELYE THEN BE ONE OF THE TWENTY-ODD PEOPLE LEAVING THE EMBASSY, OR ONE OF THE TEN TO FIFTEEN STAYING?
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A. WE ARE STILL STUDYING THAT.

Q. HOW MANY NON-EMBASSY-TYPE AMERICANS ARE THERE THAT WOULD BE COMING OUT?

A. I WILL NOT KNOW THAT UNTIL WE SEE HOW MANY WANT TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THE OPPORTUNITY. IT IS HARD TO ESTIMATE HOW MANY AMERICAN CITIZENS REMAIN IN LEBANON. AS YOU KNOW -- --

Q. A ROUGH --

A. -- A GOOD NUMBER OF THOSE THAT REMAIN ARE PEOPLE THAT HAVE BEEN LIVING THERE MORE OR LESS PERMANENTLY. I WOULD GUESS THERE ARE PROBABLY BETWEEN 800 AND 1,000 WHO ARE IN ALL OF LEBANON.

BUT FOR THE WEST BEIRUT AREA -- WHICH I WOULD EXPECT WOULD BE THE GROUP MOST AFFECTED BY THIS DECISION -- I WOULD SAY THERE ARE SEVERAL HUNDRED, INCLUDING ALIEN DEPENDENTS.

Q. BOB, ON THE QUESTION -- MAYBE I MISUNDERSTOOD YOUR ANSWER TO SCOTT -- ARE YOU SAYING THAT SEELYE MAY NOT STAY? WE MAY NOT HAVE AN AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT AFTER THIS CUT-BACK?

A. I AM SAYING THAT WE ARE STILL STUDYING THAT QUESTION.

Q. SO IT IS A POSSIBILITY THAT SEELYE IS GOING TO COME OUT AND THERE WILL BE NO U.S. AMBASSADOR?

A. IT IS A POSSIBILITY.

Q. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT HE IS NOT THE AMBASSADOR, THOUGH, IS THAT CORRECT? HE IS A SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE?

A. HE IS THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRESIDENT, AND HE HAS BEEN IN CHARGE OF THE EMBASSY.

Q. NOW IS THERE STILL AN INTENTION TO APPOINT A NEW
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AMBASSADOR, AS THE SECRETARY ONCE SAID?

A. YES, THAT INTENTION REMAINS. BUT I THINK WE ARE GETTING AHEAD -- NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT AMBASSADOR SEELYE . AND WE ARE PRIMARILY CLOSING DOWN THE CONSULAR SECTION. WE ARE STILL KEEPING A FUNCTIONING EMBASSY IN BEIRUT WHICH IS CHARGED WITH CONTINUING TO CARRY OUT, AS BEST IT CAN, THE MISSION WE HAVE REPEATEDLY ENUNCIATED.

Q. BOB DESPITE -- I WOULD LIKE TO PURSUE THIS A BIT -- IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT EVEN THOUGH YOU DON'T ATTRIBUTE THIS TO ANY SINGLE NEW FACTOR OR ANY NEW POLITICAL FACTOR, IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT THIS DRASTIC REDUCTION OF THE SIZE OF THE EMBASSY AND THE NUMBERS OF AMERICANS IN LEBANON, AUTOMATICALLY HAS TO REPRESENT SOME KIND OF A POLITICAL ASSESSMENT AS TO THE FUTURE OUTLOOK OF LEBANON.

NOW DOESN'T IT DO THAT? DOESN'T IT REPRESENT A RATHER GRIM FORECAST AS TO THE OUTLOOK IN LEBANON?

A. IF THE SITUATION IMPROVES, OR IF THERE IS A TRUCE, THERE IS NO GREAT DIFFICULTY IN BRINGING PEOPLE BACK IN. AS I HAVE INDICATED, OTHER EMBASSIES HAVE EITHER DRASTICALLY REDUCED THEIR STAFFS -- EVEN BEFORE WE HAVE -- INCLUDING THE BRITISH, FRENCH, THE SOVIET UNION, AS WELL AS GERMANY. AND A LOT OF OTHERS HAVE CLOSED THEIRS.

THE QUESTION -- THE DECISION TO URGE REMAINING AMERICAN CITIZENS TO LEAVE AND TO SCALE DOWN OUR STAFF IS FOR THE REASONS I HAVE STATED: THE STEADILY DETERIORATING LIVING CONDITIONS AND THE UNCERTAIN SECURITY SITUATION.

NOW WE DO NOT MINIMIZE THE DIFFICULTY, OR THE TRAGEDY OF THIS LEBANESE CIVIL WAR. BUT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT, GIVEN SOME GOODWILL AND GIVEN, ABOVE ALL, WHAT WE WOULD HOPE WOULD BE AN INCREASING REALIZATION BY THE LEBANESE PARTIES THAT NONE OF THEM CAN IMPOSE A SOLUTION BY FORCE --

THAT IN THAT CONTEXT, THERE ARE PROSPECTS FOR A SOLUTION.

Q. BOB --
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A. AND WE BELIEVE -- MAY I FINISH MY THOUGHT --

AND WE BELIEVE THERE ARE POSSIBILITIES OF A LEBANESE SETTLE-MENT. AND IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE STRONGLY SUPPORT A CONFERENCE IN WHICH ALL THE PARTIES IN LEBANON WOULD GET TOGETHER AND ATTEMPT TO SETTLE THEIR AFFAIRS. AND THAT IS

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WHAT OUR EMBASSY WILL CONTINUE TO URGE.

Q. BOB --

Q. WITHDRAWAL MEANS YOU SEE NO SIGNS OF THAT HAPPENING IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE AND IT'S GOING TO BE GETTING WORSE.

A. FUNCTIONAL OFFICERS ARE REMAINING. IT IS PRIMARILY THE CONSULAR SECTION, AND THE NECESSARY SUPPORT PEOPLE THAT GO WITH IT, THAT ARE COMING OUT.

Q. BUT IS IT ENTIRELY THE CONSULAR SECTION, OR ARE THERE OTHER EMBASSY FUNCTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN STOPPED?

A. I THINK IT IS MAINLY THE CONSULAR SECTION.

Q. HOW MANY CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE THERE NOW?

A. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. DON'T YOU HAVE ANY -- (INAUDIBLE)?

A. WE ARE GOING DOWN FROM 36 TO 15, ROUGHLY, SO THAT IT WILL BE CUT IN HALF.

Q. YOU DON'T KNOW (INAUDIBLE)?

A. AND, OF COURSE A CORRESPONDING NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL.

Q. IF AMBASSADOR SEELYE LEFT, WOULD THERE REMAIN OTHERS IF THE 15 LEAVE WITH HIM?

A. FIRST, YOU KNOW THERE HAS BEEN NO DECISION REACHED
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ON THAT.

BUT IN ANY CASE, WHEN AN AMBASSADOR IS NOT PRESENT THE EMBASSY WOULD CONTINUE UNDER A CHARGE.

Q. BOB, ON THIS QUESTION THE SECRETARY USED THE SAME PHRASE, "GIVEN THE GOODWILL AND THE REALIZATION --" AND ALL OF THAT --

THERE IS NO INDICATION, IS THERE, NOR HAS THERE BEEN FOR SOME TIME, THAT THERE IS ANY GOODWILL AMONG THE PARTIES NOR A REALIZATION THAT FORCE SHOULD BE ABANDONED, NOR IS THERE ANY SIGN OF A CONFERENCE BY THE LEBANESE PARTIES THERE IS THERE?

A. THERE IS NO --

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Q. -- SO CAN'T YOUR HOPE BEST BE DESCRIBED AS "WISHFUL THINKING?"

A. NO, IT IS STILL A HOPE.

Q. IS THERE ANY SUBSTANCE BEHIND THE HOPE?

I CAN HOPE FOR A MILLION DOLLARS TO BE DELIEVERED IN MY LAP, TOMORROW, BUT WHAT'S BEHIND IT?

A. LOGIC.

Q. -- BUT THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE OF THAT HAPPENING.

A. LOGIC IS BEHIND THE HOPE.

NO PARTY CAN IMPOSE A SOLUTION, AND I THINK PARTIES ARE PROBABLY COMING TO REALIZE THAT.

BUT THIS WAR HAS BEEN GOING ON AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO WIND DOWN.

Q. BOB, DID AMBASSADOR DINITZ COME IN TO SEE THE SECRETARY THIS MORNING? I DIDN'T NOTICE IT ON THE SCHEDULE, BUT UNCLASSIFIED

IT WAS REPORTED THAT HE DID.

A. ALL I KNOW IS THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THEY WOULD MEET. BUT I DO NOT HAVE CONFIRMATION THAT THEY ACTUALLY MET. LET ME CHECK INTO IT.

Q. HE DID COME INTO THE BUILDING?

A. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY ACTUALLY MET. I WILL HAVE TO CHECK INTO THAT. THE SECRETARY WAS RUNNING LATE THIS MORNING FROM HIS MEETINGS AT THE WHITE HOUSE IN CONNECTION WITH THE SCHMIDT VISIT, WHICH IS ONE OF THE REASONS I AM LATE WITH MY BRIEFING TODAY. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 15 SEP 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE177554
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/P:EOJONES
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D760275-1151
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197607109/baaaepjj.tel
Line Count: 423
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hackerp0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13 FEB 2004 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <31 JAN 2005 by hackerp0>
Review Markings:

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Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - JULY 16
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, US
To: AMMAN
BEIRUT
MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006